

Briefing Statement

Bureau: National Park Service

Issue: Results of the FY 2005 Operational Enhancements

Park: Valley Forge National Historical Park

Date: January 2006

Valley Forge National Historical Park was fortunate to receive an additional \$148,000 for visitor services in 2005 in federal funds. With this funding the park broadened its services and brought programming to a wider range of visitors using flexible staffing and scheduling as well as a growing network of partners. Through collaboration with neighboring organizations, the park was able offer an array of services broader than what we have been able to deliver for almost a decade. Collaboration and an infusion of funding supported the following:

- The summer programming season was extended from 8 to 10 weeks and visitor center operating hours were extended. Rangers were able to interact with visitors on the popular trail system during high use periods, especially early on weekend mornings.
- Working with the Student Conservation Association, the park developed a package of internships that enabled staffing to be increased, partnership programming to be enhanced, and that offered meaningful opportunities for interns seeking careers in interpretation and conservation.
- In 2003-2004, the park received Transportation Interpreter grants from NPS/Ford Motor Company funding interns to provide 90 minute guided bus tours of the park. The tours have been so successful that we now offer them throughout the high visitation season. In 2005 the park funded the program and increased the availability of the tours.
- In partnership with the National Audubon Society's Mill Grove, a National Historic Landmark adjacent to the park, the NPS utilized a Volunteer Enhancement grant received from National Park Foundation. The grant nurtured our growing partnership with this organization and enabled us to offer joint recruitment and volunteer certification in six key subject matter areas, including watersheds, geology, habitats, mammals, birding and the history of conservation.

These programs, coupled with a strengthening of the partnership with the Valley Forge Convention and Visitor Bureau, produced the following effects on our visitation levels:

- Total visitation to the park was **up** in 2005 over 2004 by **3.83%**
- Total visitors into the park's Welcome Center was **up** in 2005 over 2004 by **22.71%**
- Total visitors on park bus tours was **up** in 2005 over 2004 by **52%**
- Total number of students receiving educational programs in the park was **up** in 2005 over 2004 by **23%**

Contact: Mike Caldwell, Superintendent, 610-783-1037